



New Faces essay collection, Florence March, June 2018

Video : Interview with Olivier Py, director of Avignon Festival

Florence March (Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3)

Abstract :

On 14th May 2018, Florence March interviewed Olivier Py, the director of the international Avignon Festival and a distinguished writer, theatre director and actor, about his work on Shakespeare, with inmates of a prison house, the penitentiary of Le Pontet. Assisted by Enzo Verdet, Py initiates them to theatre practice, alternating productions of Ancient Greek tragedies with Shakespeare's plays. The weekly workshops lead the group of inmates to put on a play, which they perform behind bars, as well as out of prison, in a venue of the Avignon Festival.

What can Shakespeare do for inmates? And what can inmates do with Shakespeare? Why does Olivier Py focus on Shakespeare in particular? Does civic theatre, a label that applies both to Shakespeare and Ancient Greek drama, facilitate rehabilitation and reinsertion? Does Shakespeare exert some kind of "reparative power", to borrow Douglas Lanier's phrase? The other way round, to what extent does the highly codified space of the prison challenge the theatre, pushing it to its very limits?

Florence March was accompanied by Fabrice Belmessieri, a videographer at university Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3.